



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 27 December 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
27 DECEMBER 1968

1. Vietnam

Heavy Communist reinforcements appear to be headed for the two northernmost provinces of South Vietnam. A North Vietnamese division may be involved. Intercepted communications indicate elements of two, and probably three, regiments are moving south through southern North Vietnam and Laos. They seem to be coming around, rather than through, the Demilitarized Zone. Arrival of a new division would almost double enemy main force strength in this area.

2. EURATOM

For the first time, West Germany, Italy, and the Benelux members of EURATOM have ridden over French objections and agreed on a major research program without French participation.

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3. Japan

Normal operation of some 50 colleges is now impeded by disorders, and one university has been closed. The students are making demands, familiar from Berlin to Berkeley, for changes in educational policies and school administration. And, as elsewhere in the world, a small but vocal band of ultra-leftist radicals is spearheading the battle with the "establishment." So far, Sato has no solution, and growing public criticism could cost him politically.

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4. Nationalist China

There appears to be growing sentiment at top levels of government for reducing Nationalist China's oversized armed forces. Both Defense Minister Chiang Ching-kuo and the chief of the general staff are thinking in terms of cutting back the 600,000-man military establishment. (A reduction of 50,000 is one figure mentioned.) They face one big problem, however--Chiang Kai-shek. The elder Chiang, locked to his pledge to retake the mainland, would cast a cold eye indeed on any proposal to reduce armed strength.

Chiang Ching-kuo has implied on several recent occasions that he might be able to persuade his father to trim manpower if he got a US-supported equipment modernization program.

5. Middle East

Yesterday an Egyptian official briefed the US representative in Cairo on Gromyko's visit. The Egyptian said the Soviets would be contacting the US, probably with an updated version of the timetable proposal they made earlier. This was a scheme that would have both sides agree to a schedule of reciprocal actions leading finally to Israel: withdrawal and an Arab statement of non-belligerency.

The Egyptian also noted the Soviets had been fully briefed on recent US-Egyptian contacts and raised no objection. The Russians, in fact, had suggested such contacts be maintained.

6. Italy

The Italians intend to sign the nonproliferation treaty soon, possibly within the next few weeks. Foreign Minister Nenni told Ambassador Ackley that the treaty was too important to delay despite the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of US
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

[redacted] Observations from Hanoi: [redacted]

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[redacted]
picture of life in that city in early December.

Slow progress has been noted in efforts to clean up the debris in the streets of Hanoi, and attempts are being made to redecorate some of the buildings and shops in the center of the city. Some factories on the outskirts of Hanoi are being cleared of rubble and roofed and are then used to house light industries and as warehouses. Foxholes and shelters are being cleaned and repaired, and the latter are being painted.

Employees at a factory near the consulate general are continuing to receive regular training in drill, camouflage, and small arms, but [redacted] the exercises as designed primarily to keep the population alert and active, rather than serving any real military role.

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[redacted] air raid shelter construction continues, although apparently at a reduced level. Large-scale underground construction is under way at two sites in the city. A Vietnamese source is quoted as stating that many more deep and strong shelters are under construction but are not normally noticeable to persons above ground as access to them is from the inside of buildings.

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The economy continues plagued by a rice shortage. Beginning on 1 December, the proportion of cereal substitute (usually flour) in the rice ration was increased to 60 percent. Small bakeries have been

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opened in the center of Hanoi and machines installed for making the flour (which the Vietnamese do not know how to use in their homes) into a type of vermicelli.

Finally, a Soviet assistant military attaché has returned from a visit to the northern provinces complaining that he was obliged to obtain a pass from Chinese military officials to travel in certain areas. The Soviet officer also reported that during the course of his tour, he was stopped several times for his pass to be checked by Chinese soldiers.

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Haiphong Conditions: A picture of jumbled piles of goods in the streets is provided by another recent eye-witness account of a visit to North Vietnam's biggest port. The source [redacted] was in Haiphong early this month. He described an incredible collection of supplies stacked everywhere.

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"The entire city is crowded with storage vans, crates, and open piles of equipment. Beginning at the entrance to the main port area, and reaching out to the suburbs, every street is jammed with equipment which has been unloaded at the port."

The source remarked that the city looked like one vast storage depot. There have been numerous reports from a variety of sources describing much the same scene.

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Logistic Activity Continues to Increase: A high level of logistic activity continued in southern North Vietnam during the past week. [redacted]

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[redacted] Road-
watch teams near Mu Gia Pass [redacted] during December have indicated a sharp seasonal rise in Laotian trucking, but nothing like the increased logistic effort in southern North Vietnam since the bombing halt in November.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL
ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

There is nothing of significance to report
today.

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